

DUTY OF DRIVER (EMERGENCY RESPONSE)

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Drivers must know the limitations of red lights and sirens. In all cases the safety of the general public must take precedence over the response speed of the emergency vehicle.

Legally, as well as ethically, the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle responding to an emergency must use good judgment. The law does not relieve a driver from regarding the safety of everyone using the highway, nor does it protect a driver from the consequences of carelessly exercising exemption privileges. Employees are not, however, liable for civil damages arising out of the proper operation of an authorized emergency vehicle when responding to an emergency call in the line of duty.

The following guidelines comply with the CVC:

- An authorized emergency vehicle driver must comply with the rules of the road.
- Pedestrians and motorists must be given an opportunity to yield the right of way.
- In traversing an intersection in a Code 3 situation, an emergency vehicle must drive slowly enough to stop without collision if its right of way is violated. It may be necessary to completely stop first and then proceed cautiously when the intersection is clear.
- Do not pull up close behind a vehicle and suddenly sound the siren, as the driver may brake immediately.
- Do not pass on the right unless no other course is open, and then pass only at a cautious speed after you positively know that the car you are passing will not pull to the right as you go by.
- Do not sound the siren at its highest pitch continuously. Fluctuate its tone.
- Keep near the center of the roadway so oncoming vehicles can see the red light approaching.
- Be extremely careful when following another emergency vehicle. A motorist may yield to the first emergency vehicles and then pull out in front of you.
- The best route for making an emergency response often includes a freeway. Using red lights and the siren on a freeway is not required or recommended, providing the vehicle is not exceeding the posted speed limit or disregarding other traffic regulations. The unnecessary use of the siren and red lights on a freeway may cause confusion and impede the safe flow of other traffic.

- Keep air horn use to a minimum, as its excessive use may drown out the siren. Generally, during Code 3 responses, use the air horn only when approaching intersections; two or three short blasts should suffice. Using excessive air to operate the horn can reduce the air pressure left to operate the fire engine brake system.

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